Spain Is Improving Air Service to Cuba

By Richard S. Mowrer
Chicago Daily News Service

MADRID—Spain is expanding her air links with Communist Cuba. Starting next Monday, DC-8 jets will replace the piston-powered aircraft of Iberia Airlines now on the Havana run. For the return flights, the newer and faster American-built planes will use Russian jet fuel stockpiled in Cuba.

Three of the six DC-8s Iberia now has were acquired with the help of loans from the U.S.-sponsored Import-Export Bank. These will not be put on the Havana, once-a-week schedule, according to an Iberia spokesman. But no restrictions apply to the other three jets since they were acquired independently of American aid, it is pointed out.

The DC-8s have more than double the carrying capacity of the aging propeller-driven Constellations now shuttling between Havana and Madrid: 130 passengers as against 60. Spanish officials say there is a waiting list of 59,000 persons wanting to be flown out of Cuba. Putting DC-8s into service will siphon off some of this backlog.

The increased outflow of refugees could whittle down a dollar-earning racket tied to emigration run by Fidel Castro's regime. Or it could keep the racket going — nobody seems quite sure which.

The racket works this way:

Would-be refugees get relatives or friends outside to deposit in a Cuban government account the equivalent, in U.S. dollars, of the air fare needed to get out of the country. The fare from Havana to Madrid is $308.

But refugees have to pay the round-trip fare even if they only want out. That costs them $585.

The Cuban government pays Iberia, in dollars, for the one-way ticket and pockets the difference. But payment to Iberia is made only when the refugees are booked on the next flight out. This means that because of the exodus bottleneck and the almost interminable waiting involved, the Cuban government has the use of the paid-in dollars for months before having to pay Iberia anything.

American officials are not happy about Spain's expanding air communications with Cuba. It knocks one more hole in the leaky U.S. "blockade" around Communist Cuba.

Moses Joining Dirksen Group

United Press International

Robert Moses, chairman of the Triborough Bridge and Tunnel Authority and director of New York's World Fair, was named yesterday as a member of the Committee for Government of the People.

Moses's appointment to the Committee, set up to conduct a "national educational campaign" for a constitutional amendment on reapportionment, was announced by the group's chairman, Sen. Everett M. Dirksen.

In accepting the Committee post, Moses said that "the people of the states must have the right to decide this issue of apportionment for themselves." He said the Dirksen-sponsored reapportionment amendment would assure that right.

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